

REMARKS

Entry of the foregoing, re-examination and reconsideration of the subject matter identified in caption, as amended, pursuant to and consistent with 37 C.F.R. §1.112, and in light of the remarks which follow, are respectfully requested.

The specification has been amended to update the current status of the application mentioned on page 2, line 18. Claims 1 and 25 have been amended and claim 51 canceled in response to issues raised in the Office Action. Claims 1-50 remain pending in this application.

Claims 1-51 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, for the reasons set forth in paragraph (1) of the Office Action. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested in view of the above amendments and for at least the reasons which follow.

Applicants confirm that the Examiner's position is correct. The claimed language "having a degree of liberation with respect to the masking agent at 120°C of 5% (equivalent) or less" would be understood by those of ordinary skill in the art to mean that 5% equivalent or less of the masked isocyanate groups deblock at 120°C. This interpretation is consistent with various statements made throughout the specification and particularly on page 29 thereof (octanol deblocking test). The sentence on page 4 of the Response filed April 15, 2003, should have correctly read as follows: The degree of liberation refers to the fact that at 120°C., no more than 5% of isocyanate functions are

unmasked, i.e. at least 95% of the isocyanate functions remain blocked. The confusion generated by these remarks in the Response filed April 15, 2003, is regretted.

For at least the above reasons, the §112, first paragraph rejection given in paragraph (1) of the Office Action should be withdrawn. Such action is earnestly requested.

Claims 1-51 stand further rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, for the reasons expressed in paragraph (2) of the Office Action. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are requested for at least the following reasons.

It is believed that Applicants' remarks provided above in responding to the rejection set forth in paragraph (1) of the Office Action are equally applicable to the rejection in paragraph (2) of the Office Action. The "degree of liberation" property possessed by the masked isocyanates of the present invention is adequately discussed and enabled by the present disclosure. Those of ordinary skill in this art would readily comprehend the meaning and scope of the language defining the degree of liberation from a review of the specification as well as determining how to prepare blocked isocyanates having this characteristic.

Accordingly, the §112, first paragraph, rejection expressed in paragraph (2) of the Office Action should be withdrawn. Such action is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-24 and 51 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as indefinite for the reasons set forth in paragraph (3) of the Office Action. Reconsideration of this rejection is requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1 and 25 have been currently amended to specify that the masked isocyanate has a degree of liberation of 5% (equivalent) or less. Support for this amendment may be found throughout the specification. For example, note page 10, lines 25-28; page 14, lines 19-23, etc. Those of ordinary skill in this art would understand from the descriptions in the specification that the percent value means 5% in equivalents and this refers to the total equivalents of all isocyanate functions present in the composition.

This conclusion is also substantiated by the octanol test described on page 29 to determine the percentage of deblocked isocyanate functions. In this test, a mixture of equivalent quantities of isocyanate and octanol in a solvent are heated to the test temperature for 6 hours. After removal of the solvent, the residue is then analyzed by NMR, mass spectrum and infrared. From this data, the percentage of the condensation product of deblocked and thus reactive isocyanate with octanol is determined (page 29, lines 15-25).

In view of the above amendments to claims 1 and 25 and the aforementioned comments, the §112, second paragraph, rejection set forth in paragraph (3) of the Office Action should be withdrawn. Such action is respectfully requested.

Claims 25-50 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, for reasons provided in paragraph (4) of the Office Action. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are requested in view of the above amendments and the reasons which follow.

While not agreeing with the Examiner's position and solely to expedite prosecution and obtain a quick allowance, Applicants have inserted the feature of claim 51 into claim 25. Accordingly, this rejection has been obviated and should be withdrawn.

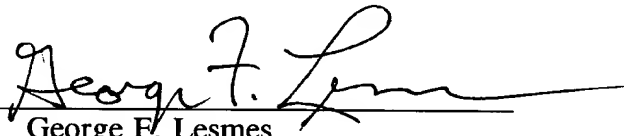
From the foregoing, further and favorable action in the form of a Notice of Allowance is believed to be next in order and such action is earnestly solicited. If there are any questions concerning this paper or the application in general, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (703) 838-6683 at his earliest convenience.

Respectfully submitted,

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